WESTCARE

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WESTCARE EXPRESS

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Veteran's Retreat to My Warrior's Place

By Sandra Patnode, Community Program Coordinator, Veteran Mentoring Program – WestCare Florida

On June 17, 2017, eight Veterans, four WestCare staff, and one mentor enjoyed a relaxing retreat on the Little Manatee River at *My Warrior's Place* in Ruskin, FL. Kelly Kowall, Founder of *My Warrior's Place*, welcomed the Veterans and shared about her son, Corey, who had given his life for his country in Afghanistan in 2009.

Dog tags hanging from the ceiling on the gazebo

As part of her grieving process, Kelly founded *My Warrior's Place* as a retreat center for Veterans, Military Service Members, First Responders, Gold Star, Blue Star, and Silver Star Families. Throughout the property there were memorials of fallen Veterans including dog tags hanging from the pavilion that sang through the gentle breeze.

Memorials for fallen Veterans

The Veterans spent the day canoeing, kayaking, paddle boating, fishing, relaxing on the dock reading, fellowshipping, and cooking on the grill. There was a sense of calm and peace throughout the day as Veterans reflected on their own stories and recovery.

FLORIDA: Veteran's Retreat to My Warrior's Place (Con't.)

Kelly and her staff spent a good part of the day sitting around the grill or on the screen porch talking and listening to the Veterans. Kelly had problems with the lawn mower, and the men quickly jumped up to assist her in getting it started and assisted her in other simple tasks.

Veterans caught a fish and gave it to My Warrior's Place staff, who cleaned it and cooked it on the grill.

Adrian Milton, MSI Central Counselor and Larry Weglarz, Expunge Coordinator, relaxing.

As the day was ending and everyone was packing up to leave, everyone took a moment to gather and express their gratitude for their recovery, for WestCare, and for *My Warrior's Place*. It was very emotional and there was not a dry eye in the circle.

Sitting on the dock chilling and reading.

The Veteran's retreats take on a life of their own and many people are needed to make this type of event happen.

A special thanks to all those who helped: WestCare Employment Specialists, Terry Jones and Carrie Annand; Director, WestCare's *A Turning Point*, Katrina Tucker; WestCare Procurement, Tony Ferrentino; WestCare Driver, Gregg Cosgrove; WestCare Counselor, Adrian Milton. Also thank you to Veteran Mentor Recruiter, Lonnie Winbush; Expunge Coordinator, Larry Weglarz; Veteran Mentor Recruiter, Karmel Johnson; MSI Central; and Kelly Kowall and all of her volunteers.

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NEVADA: *Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics*

WestCare Nevada is pleased to announce that it has been accredited by the state of Nevada to operate *Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC)* in Reno and Las Vegas. The *CCBHC* model of community based and integrated healthcare will significantly expand our focus of care for the people we serve in both rural and urban areas.

The vision of improved access to coordinated and integrated care for all ages has long been WestCare's goal as a community provider.

The *CCBHC* care teams can now provide recovery oriented systems of care that integrate physical and behavioral health care to serve the whole person.

Senior Vice President for Healthcare Integration and Business Development, Kathy Paxton, WestCare Nevada Regional Vice President, Kevin Morss, and their team pulled together and worked tirelessly to create an interdisciplinary regimen to meet the rigorous standards of each stage of the certification process.

We are improving our ability to provide quality care for every person that enters through any WestCare door by supporting them throughout their entire journey of healing and recovery. We hope that this model can be replicated at WestCare locations across the country and beyond.

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WISCONSIN: *YAC Promotes Gun Safety*

WestCare Wisconsin's *Youth Action Council (YAC)* held a press conference to kick off their summer campaign to raise awareness about gun safety, *Love Up Lock Down*.

All the major news station attended to hear Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs and Devin Davis of the *Youth Action Council* talk about the importance of keeping guns locked and away from youth. This summer, the *YAC* will attend civic events and canvas neighborhoods passing out free gun locks and educating the public about the importance if gun safety.

WISCONSIN: *YAC Kicks Off Hugs No Drugs Campaign*

WestCare Wisconsin's *Youth Action Council (YAC)* took part in Milwaukee's Annual Juneteenth Day Parade and Festival and used the event to announce another youth-led summer campaign, *Hugs No Drugs*. Funded by a *Families Moving Forward* Grant, *YAC* members participated in a training and have selected an evidence-based curriculum that is based on best practices. The curriculum is age appropriate and designed to be fun for teenagers. As part of the larger campaign, the *YAC* will be at events all summer promoting their message of *Hugs No Drugs*.

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WISCONSIN: *Mother's Day Building Beautification*

Staff and volunteers gathered on Mother's Day help make WestCare Wisconsin a beautiful space where people will feel welcome and safe.

Creating a healthy community begins in our home.

WISCONSIN: *YAC Attends Bader Philanthropies Luncheon*

Members of WestCare Wisconsin's *Youth Action Council* attended a luncheon sponsored by Bader Philanthropies.

The organization held the luncheon to announce their move to the Harambee neighborhood and the work they are planning in the community.

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CALIFORNIA: *Celebrating Mental Health Matters Month*

Throughout the month of May, staff from across the WestCare California family of programs showed their support for Mental Health Matters Month.

Our Administration office, Martin Luther King Residential facility, Housing Services, CBT at Pelican Bay State Prison, Stockton CCTRP, *Supportive Overnight Stay*, and *San Joaquin Valley Veterans* programs made pledges to educate themselves and others about the importance of promoting mental health and wellness.

Through continued awareness, we can help put an end to the stigma and show that mental health matters to everyone.

CALIFORNIA: *27th Annual Fresno Rainbow Pride Parade*

Our WestCare California staff was proud to once again be a part of the annual Fresno Rainbow Pride Parade on behalf of *The Living Room* and the 2017 Fresno AIDS Walk. We participated with a walking float in line with the theme of "One Step Starts a Movement" with signs in hand.

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CALIFORNIA: *Substance Use Disorder Treatment at SCC Graduation*

"Our staff at the Sierra Conservation Center (SCC) held a graduation ceremony for approximately 60 participants. Deputy Warden, ***Hunter Anglea*** *was on hand to address the participants and offer his congratulations and encouragement. Associate Warden of Programs, Landon Bird was also in attendance.*

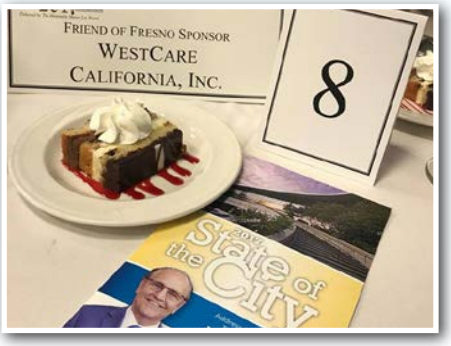
Each graduating class was represented by a member of that group who spoke on subjects such as what they had gotten from their experience in the SUDT program; how they were treated while enrolled in the program; and the tools they had collected that will enable them, upon release, to rebuild their lives and become productive members of their communities.

The master of ceremonies of the event was a life inmate that had previously been through the program and now holds the position of a non-certified peer mentor. The afternoon featured music performed by graduates of the program as well as a skit highlighting the social skills learned in the program. Following the ceremony, the participants were treated to root beer floats and time to socialize. WestCare staff felt grateful and privileged to be able to share this experience with these men."

- Dennis Sagmiller, Program Director, *SUDT at SCC*

CALIFORNIA: *State of the City*

Our WestCare California staff and leadership attended the Fresno Chamber of Commerce's 2017 State of the City Address by Fresno Mayor, Lee Brand. We were grateful to be a part of the event, to hear about the progress the city has made, and get a glimpse of what we can expect in the future.



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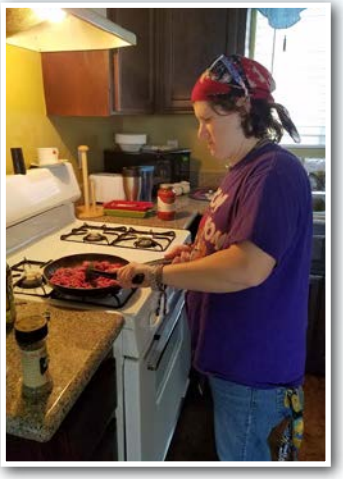
CALIFORNIA: *2017 Fresno NAMI Walk*

As part of a longstanding tradition, WestCare California participated in the 2017 Fresno NAMI Walk at Woodward Park. Our *Supportive Overnight Stay* staff walked in support of mental health awareness. Our volunteers from MLK Residential made us proud with their hard work setting up and tearing down the event and then representing us in the walk. Leadership from NAMI Fresno visited our MLK Residential facility to present certificates and say thanks to our volunteers for all of their help following the event.

CALIFORNIA: *Veterans at HomeFront Practice Healthy Nutrition*



In June, the Veteran women of our *HomeFront* Grant Per Diem transitional living facility for women, Veterans, and Veteran mothers with children, participated in a fun and educational nutrition class. The topic of discussion was eggplant and its nutritional benefits. Afterwards, they had the opportunity to make a special dish as a group, "The Ultimate Eggplant Lasagna!" This was a great way for the women to come together as a community and help boost each other's confidence while trying something new. They were able to share laughs while building life skills, which benefits their health and well-being in the long run.

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LGBTQ: *July Is New Member Month!*

by WestCare's LGBTQ Awareness and Advisory Council

A little more than a year ago WestCare's senior leadership supported the establishment of our organization's first LGBTQ Awareness and Advisory Council.

Our Council continues to bring together employees and volunteers in a safe space to advance WestCare towards becoming fully LGBTQ-friendly and culturally competent.

Three primary functions form the foundation of our Council's work, including:

- Providing guidance on policies, procedures, treatment/program models, training, grants, and more, as it relates to LGBTQ individuals;
- Helping to increase organization-wide awareness and knowledge about diversity, inclusion, and equality; and
- Encouraging fellowship and connections among LGBTQ employees, the people we serve, volunteers, and their allies.

Culturally competent healthcare is important because a long history of anti-LGBTQ bias in healthcare continues to impact access, use, and outcomes among members of the LGBTQ community. This contributes to numerous health disparities that uniquely affect LGBTQ individuals.

Our Council is a key element in helping WestCare to achieve its goal of becoming an international model of culturally competent behavioral healthcare for non-majority populations.

Now, we want you to be part of WestCare's LGBTQ Awareness and Advisory Council. Your unique perspective and talents will enrich our Council and make a difference within WestCare, especially as we begin to develop LGBTQ-friendly and culturally competent treatment models and trainings.

You don't have to identify as a member of the LGBTQ community to be part of the Council. All WestCare employees and volunteers are welcome.

Don't think you have the time to be part of the Council? Most members invest no more than 1-2 hours of time per month in Council activities including a monthly call.

Contact the LGBTQ Awareness and Advisory Council at *lgbtqcouncil@westcare.com* to join us in July during "new member month!"

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KUDOS!

WESTCARE CALIFORNIA

Marcelino Maytorena, Brandi Sanchez and Charlene Washington: Kudos to Marcelino, Brandi and Charlene for their outstanding WestCare spirit and willingness to help. They respond quickly to last minute requests and changes, making the day easier for everyone who works with them.

Robert Motley: Robert uplifted the human spirit by delivering furniture for a two bedroom unit for a pregnant mother of three, so that she and her family would not have to sleep on the floor.

Annette Ortega: Kudos to Annette for doing an absolutely wonderful job in helping Teresa learn all about her new job. Your wisdom and generosity are noticed and appreciated.

WESTCARE ILLINOIS

Linda Avila-Trivino: Linda introduced weekly *Peace Circles* to WestCare Illinois a few months ago. On Friday afternoons, *Peace Circles* help staff focus on self-care and well-being. Linda has been a great addition to the team and shows great compassion for both the people we serve and her colleagues.

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KUDOS!

WESTCARE ILLINOIS

Phyllis Martin: Since coming to WestCare, Phyllis has changed the lives of people we serve through *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Trauma-Informed* group counselling. Her own life journey has helped her uplift the human spirit by meeting the people we serve where they are and empowering them in build better lives.

Darold Wicker: In addition to the vital work he does in helping the people we serve recover from substance use disorders, Darold's sense of humor helps uplift the spirits of everyone he works with. He loves the work he does, and in everything he does he demonstrates how much he values and appreciates those who work side by side with him on the front lines.

WESTCARE FOUNDATION

Alicia Campbell, Frances Hruby, Denise Johnson-Williams, and Wendy Ramos: Kudos to Alicia, Frances, Denise, and Wendy for their hard work on pulling together the Board meeting on June 24. These four did an amazing job ensuring that everyone had what they needed in front of them at starting time to conduct the business of this large organization. They also organized travel and accommodations, made sure everyone was fed, and a hundred other tasks that are required to pull off a meeting of this importance. It could not have happened without their hard work.

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ILLINOIS: *Honored With the Community Support Award*

WestCare Illinois was honored to receive the Community Support Award from Camelot Academy of Chicago at the class of 2017 graduation. Program Manager Linda Avila-Trivino accepted the award on behalf of WestCare Illinois at the commencement ceremony on June 15th. The event celebrated the graduating class of six Chicago area Camelot Education transitional and accelerated schools.

Throughout the ceremony, presentations from faculty and students made it apparent that many of the graduates had to overcome tremendous obstacles to earn their diploma. From adjusting to the rigid structure of the school to dealing with instability at home, it was clear that defying the odds and making it to graduation was a proud moment for teachers, families, and students. Student speakers emphasized that Camelot Academy helped them realize that success is in reach no matter what challenges life presents.

Camelot Academy of Chicago is a transitional school that assists students in developing behavioral skills, academics, and consistent attendance. This school community serves Chicago youth who have had disciplinary challenges at traditional public schools. WestCare Illinois had the privilege of working closely with Camelot to provide counseling and community engagement programs for the students.

It was an honor be a part of the achievement of these young leaders. Congratulations to the class of 2017!

Darold Wicker, Program Manager Linda Avila Trivino, Ms. Hunt, and Gary Brown at the ceremony on June 15th. Ms. Hunt is the Special Education Assistant at Camelot South Shore Academy and was the person chosen to present the award.

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ILLINOIS: Congressman Davis Attends Visits to Dad's Program

On June 17, 2017, Congressman Danny Davis from the 7th district in Chicago visited Sheridan Correctional Center. His office provided transportation for 38 family members and their children for *Family Connections Visits to Dad's* Program.

Transportation is a barrier for some families, which meant that it had been over a year since some had seen their loved ones. It was heartwarming to see the people we serve visit and interact with their children, who ranged from 11 months to 18 years old.

The families visited for a couple hours, after which Congressman Davis and the clergy from faith based communities met with the men alone. Congressman Davis took this moment to stress how much children need fathers in their lives.

In this small group, the men we serve shared how the curriculum CBT book and *Inside Out Dads* have helped them reconnect with being a responsible parent. As heartwarming as the beginning of the day was, it was equally heart wrenching when the families had to say "so-long".

John Zidek, WestCare Program Director; Mark Nelson, IDOC Clinical Supervisor; Congressman Danny Davis; David Gomez, Warden.

How Anyone Can Support WestCare Online

If you know someone who loves to shop online, they can help WestCare by shopping at *AmazonSmile* (bookmark *https://smile.amazon.com/ch/86-0852629*) and selecting WestCare Foundation. A portion of the purchase will be donated to WestCare at no cost to the shopper.

WestCare is registered with *PayPal Giving Fund*. When shopping on eBay or using PayPal online, users can select WestCare as their charity of choice. Donations can be made by visiting *https://www.paypal.com/fundraiser/10586513705061816/charity/74402*.

WestCare is also on *Razoo*, the online fundraising engine. The organization participates in events like #GivingTuesday. Donations can be made by heading to the following link: *https://www.razoo.com/us/story/Westcare-Foundation*.

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ILLINOIS: *Seeking Safety Training*

The Sheridan Correctional Center is grateful to WestCare's Admissions Director at The Village South, Elyse Dermer, for facilitating a training on *Seeking Safety*. Westcare Illinois staff from the Lincoln, Logan, and Sheridan Correctional Centers were in attendance as well as staff from Duquoin and Dixon Springs Boot Camps.

A new curriculum that will be introduced to the people we serve once a week, *Seeking Safety* helps people learn how to cope without the use of substances, reduce and manage trauma symptoms more effectively, and increase safety.

Topics include, healing from anger, setting boundaries, honesty, compassion, and healthy relationships. People who attend *Seeking Safety* will learn about PTSD and substance use disorders; coping skills; safety; and self-care.

Staff learned that an important aspect of facilitating *Seeking Safety* groups is opening and closing each session by having attendees make a commitment to change and by adhering to the 80/20 rule – attendees speak 80% of the time, staff speaks 20% of the time.

This curriculum will be a valuable addition to our resources for helping the people we serve address trauma and substance use disorders. Teaching people how to more effectively deal with trauma will hopefully remove barriers to overcoming addiction.

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US VIRGIN ISLANDS: *Graduates Help by Volunteering*

Women graduates from Winona State University started helping with The Village in Virgin Islands at Susanna's Place. The volunteer students got to know the women we serve through short activities that focused on self-empowerment.

PUERTO RICO: *Highlights*

WestCare Senior Vice President, Caribbean & Latin America, Cristian Duarte, met with the Mayor of Caguas, The Honorable William Miranda Torres, to thank him for the support he and the town have given us. The meeting also served to reinforce our efforts to continue providing services in this wonderful community.

In an effort to reach a collaborative agreement with the Puerto Rico Department of Correction, Guara Bi, Inc., visited the office of the Secretary of Correction; an Intergovernmental Coordinator, Rolando Crespo; Mr. Amaury Veray, from the Municipality of Aguadilla; and Mr. Luis Cruz, the Auxiliary Assistant to the Secretary of Correction. This alliance will allow us to extend our efforts in developing reentry programs for people transitioning out of correctional facilities in Puerto Rico.

Guara Bi celebrated Father's Day with the people we serve, family, and staff. The people we serve enjoyed gifts, food, fun, and games in an atmosphere of one big happy family.

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